

Rhode Island Natural Heritage Preservation Commission Scoring Criteria for Open Space Grants

The Natural Heritage Preservation Commission and the Natural Heritage Preservation Commission Advisory Committee shall evaluate grant applications based on the following scoring criteria. (100 points total)

(A) HABITAT PROTECTION (20 points)
Up to 5 points may be awarded per category.

1. **Critical and/or Uncommon Habitat:** The property supports critical and/or uncommon, ecologically fragile habitat, or is a unique ecological community in the state or region. Consideration will be given to future impacts associated with sea level rise and increased flooding as a result of climate change on any habitats supported by the subject property.

Habitat/Community Types considered:

Estuarine Intertidal Wetlands
Freshwater Tidal Marsh
Coastal Plain Pond and/or Pondshore
Open Peatland (Bogs and Fens)
Vernal Pools
Morainal Grasslands
Maritime/Inland Dune System
Pitch Pine/Scrub Oak Barrens
Calcareous Habitats (forests, outcrops, etc.)

2. **Habitat Diversity:** The property is capable of supporting a diversity of habitats as indicated by the presence of the Ecological Land Unit (ELU) classes “Better” or “Best”.
3. **Rare/Endangered Species:** The property supports or is capable of supporting rare/endangered species identified as targets/priority for conservation in the State Wildlife Action Plan.
4. **Cores:** The property lies within a core natural area that includes forest and brushland blocks 30 meters from development and are greater than 250 acres. *If the forest block is larger than 500 acres, the full 5 points may be awarded. If the forest block is 250-500 acres, then 1-4 points may be awarded. .*

(B) CONNECTIVITY OR REGIONAL LINKAGES (10 points)

Up to 5 points may be awarded per category.

1. The property is contiguous to or in close proximity to other protected land.
2. The property is contiguous to a river or a stream as defined in Section 2-1-20 (13 and 15) of the Rhode Island Fresh Water Wetlands Act.

(C) PLAN IMPLEMENTATION (15 points)

The property acquisition implements:

- a specific action in the Comprehensive Plan Implementation Program; or,
- an implementation action in an element of the State Guide Plan; or,
- an implementation action in any other conservation plan deemed acceptable by the Commission.

The application must reference any plan that relates to the acquisition proposal. Up to 15 points may be awarded. If the cited plan specifically mentions the protection of the subject parcel or a conservation area of which the parcel is part, then the full 15 points can be awarded.

(D) WATER RESOURCE PROTECTION (10 points)

Up to 2 points may be awarded per category

1. **Community Wellhead Protection:** The property contains or is adjacent to a community wellhead protection area.
2. **Non-Community Wellhead Protection:** The property contains or is adjacent to a non-community wellhead protection area.
3. **Reservoir Protection:** The property is adjacent to a drinking water reservoir or any direct tributaries.
4. **Groundwater Recharge Area:** The property is located in an area of “GAA” groundwater classification as delineated by RI DEM.

Up to 2 points may be awarded based on the size of the property and percentage of land located within the GAA Groundwater Recharge Area

5. **Drinking Water Supply Watershed:** The property is located in a drinking water supply watershed.

Up to 2 points may be awarded based on the size of the property and percentage of land located within the Drinking Water Supply Watershed

(E) FLOOD PROTECTION **(5 points)**
Up to 5 points may be awarded.

The property is located within 1000 feet of a tidal water body, and/or is designated on Flood Insurance Rate Maps published by the Federal Emergency Management Agency as Special Flood Hazard Areas (V and A zones). Consideration will be given to future impacts associated with sea level rise and increased flooding as a result of climate change

(F) OTHER RESOURCE PROTECTION **(15 points)**
Up to 5 points may be awarded per category.

The acquisition will protect any of the following resources:

1. Agricultural resources: the property contains prime/important farm soils under production that will be preserved and maintained.
2. Cultural resources: the property is identified as having historic or archaeological resources.
3. Scenic resources: the property is in a scenic corridor or provides a significant scenic vista.

(G) URBAN HABITAT PROTECTION **(5 points)**
Up to 5 points may be awarded

Property is located in an urban or densely developed area where the habitat and/or open space values are significant or unique.

(H) PUBLIC RECREATION OPPORTUNITY **(10 points)**
Up to 5 points may be awarded per category.

1. The property provides public recreational opportunities.
2. The property connects a neighborhood or population center to protected open space or significant natural resources.

(H) MANAGEMENT CAPACITY and CONSISTENCY (10 points)
Up to 10 points may be awarded considering all categories

1. The planned property use appropriately considers the habitat/resource identified for protection.
2. The identified management entity has capacity to properly manage the property or potential to partner with other entities to manage.
3. The identified management entity has a good track record of property management.
4. The identified management entity is in compliance with the provisions of any current easements and management plans.